

VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #123 *"Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media"*

October 2021

President's Message: Only a Passing Phase, We Hope

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**



Be ready for anything. That's my message for this month's issue of the Valley Broadcast Legends newsletter.

The last time I spoke with you from the middle of a medical crisis, it was some kind of neurological disease brought on by spending too much time at the assignment desk or it was something out of a John Grisham thriller. Now it's looking more like the last laugh.

I'm still mellow for I don't care a fig about things like wills or trusts or power of attorney. You learn about them only when your back is against the wall. By then it's too late. Now I am thrown into a situation where at least some passing knowledge of the above is at the root of my very survival. I'm hoping that this is all only a passing phase, but one can never be too certain.

As the saying goes, I'll keep you posted. In the meantime, **Mike Guiliano** will be taking over as acting president.

I hope the club members will treat him with the same disrespect they have always shown me.

Hail to the Chief!

by VBL Secretary **Allen Chamberlin**

Many of you would undoubtedly like to do a little something to show your support to President **Jim Drennan** as he recuperates at the assisted living center. Here are ways to do just that.

The quickest way to speak with him is to **call his cellphone: 916/261-0939**. Alas, you may also find it the fastest way to his voicemail (which is always full, be forewarned). Whatever the cause, his phone often does not ring. Instead calls go straight to recording. Having spent nearly an hour with tech support troubleshooting his phone I believe the problem may be that he turns it completely off—not setting it to standby.

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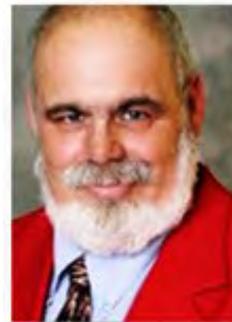
An Update from Your VP

by VBL Vice-President **Michael Guiliano**

First of all, I would like to explain why you are hearing from me and not your President, **Jim Drennan**. Jim's health has not been good. He has been in the hospital, but is now residing in an assisted living home until he can get his strength back to lead us. In the meantime, he has asked me to perform his duties until he returns. Let's hope and pray it is soon.

Now, on to VBL business. We had hoped to have our October meeting at the Club Pheasant, but with the continued spread of the Covid-19 virus, the VBL board decided it was too risky at this time.

We therefore will have a virtual Zoom meeting on October 14th at 11:30 am. You will be receiving the link via email a day or two prior to the event.



Our program's featured speakers will be our very own **Stan "The Man" Atkinson** and **Curt Foley** who will be speaking on their Adventures to Afghanistan. This should be interesting and hope everyone can make it..

We are planning and hoping to be back at the Club Pheasant for our annual Christmas lunch. We were going to have an Anniversary Party (with cake) to celebrate our Anniversary, but it looks like that will be combined with our Holiday Party.

Before I sign-off, I want to say a few words about our members and officers and thank each and every person: **Jim Drennan, Ron Middlekauff, Allen Chamberlin, Bud Kress, and Joyce Krieg** do the bulk of the work. **Kristine Hanson, Walt Shaw**, and I also put in our time and add our thoughts and ideas. We all do it because we believe in what we do. Without these individuals, there would not be the Valley Broadcast Legends!

See you all virtually on October 14th and in person in December.

Please keep Jim in your thoughts.

See next page for more on our October program.

Inside 'Afghani-Stan' on October 14

With Afghanistan back in the headlines, it seemed like a real natural to invite our very own Afghani-Stan—**Stan Atkinson**, that is—to headline the program at the October 14 VBL meeting.

As a news anchor at KCRA, Stan was sent to that troubled nation on assignment twice, first in 1982 and then in 1985. In 1982, he traveled undercover with the Mujahideen, the guerilla warriors fighting the Soviet occupiers. In 1984, Stan spent 10 days in Afghanistan with an American doctor treating residents of a village that had suffered heavy damage from the Soviets.

Stan recalls, “When I was there, the Afghan mindset and culture hadn’t changed since the Middle Ages.”

His reporting from Afghanistan netted Stan three Emmy awards. His legendary career also includes dodging bullets in Cambodia, being robbed by leftist guerillas in El Salvador, and landing on the Manson family’s hit list.

Fellow Legend **Curt Foley** was Stan’s camera operator on one of the Afghanistan trips, and he’ll be joining us at the October 14 meeting. We’ve also reached out **Kit Tyler**, another former KCRA shooter who accompanied Stan on one of the Afghanistan trips, and hope he’ll be on board as well.

This is a Zoom meeting, so no need to RSVP. Just stand by for the program to begin at 11:30 a.m. on October 14. Watch your email for the Zoom link to be sent out a day or two beforehand.



Yes, this really is our own **Stan Atkinson** at left with an Afghan guerilla fighter, reporting undercover in 1982.

Hail to the Chief

Continued from front page

Alternatively you might **call the care center 916/485-4500** and they could call him to the lobby to speak with you. They do not provide landlines in the residents’ rooms. Please keep in mind Jim is not very ambulatory at the moment.

If you wish to send a card, **the address is Sunrise of Carmichael, 5451 Fair Oaks Blvd, Room 106, Carmichael, CA 95608**

Yes, they are allowing **in-person visits**. Sunrise of Carmichael is located at the corner of Garfield Avenue and Fair Oaks Boulevard. He’s in room 106. Visiting hours are pretty much flexible. However the staff suggests you might want to avoid meal times (8:30 a.m., noon, 6:00 p.m., all times being “ish”.) I advise you call ahead to make sure he’s not scheduled for a doctor or nurse appointment. You must wear a mask and bring proof of vaccination or very recent negative COVID test to get in. There’s a sign-in device at the door along with a temperature wand. The first sign-in is a tad labored; but subsequent visits are easier. Also, remember to sign out.

As for **texting**, Jim doesn’t do it. As for **email**, Jim currently isn’t reading it. We hope to get him back online soon, so keep that option open. You can always email anticipating a future reply: **jdren88799@aol.com**. I check his email for medical and financial issues; but I do not open personal mail. If for some reason you wanted me to open your message, say to print it out for him, start your subject line with: Allen.

Example: **SUBJECT: Allen, We’re Busting Jim Out at Midnight!**

Maybe one of these days you’ll get a reply from Jim: “Midnight’s not good for me. Howz ’bout lunchtime?”

Officers

President: Jim Drennan

VP: Michael Guiliano

Treasurer: Ron Middlekauff

Secretary: Allen Chamberlin

Directors: Kristine Hanson,
Walt Shaw

In Perpetuity Our Founder

Harry Warren

Newsletter Editor: Joyce Krieg

Webmaster: Allen Chamberlin

Audio-Visual: Bud Kress

VALLEY BROADCAST
LEGENDS

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“All in the Family”

VBL salutes **Lonnie Wong** who retired September 1 after a broadcast news career that spanned nearly 50 years, 40 of them at KTXL-Fox40..

Lonnie’s prolific career began as a reporter for the student-run radio station at UC Davis, KDVS. He went on to cover politics at the State Capitol for several Bay Area radio stations, right around the time **Ronald Reagan** was finishing up his second term as California’s governor.

“When I started working at the Capitol, I was the young guy, the new guy,” he said, recalling a time when the Capitol press corps numbered some 50 or 60 reporters.

After working as a freelance reporter for networks and local television stations in Los Angeles and San Diego, in 1980 Lonnie joined the staff at KTXL.

He’s covered fires, floods and earthquakes, and was also one of very few reporters who can say he’s covered seven California governors—eight if you count **Jerry Brown**’s second stint in the office in 2011.

In an on-air tribute to Lonnie’s career, Sacramento Mayor **Darrell Steinberg** said, “I think the highest compliment that an elected official could pay to a journalist is that he was always thorough and fair. That’s Lonnie Wong’s reputation, and it’s been deserved.”

Lonnie has worked for years with the Sacramento chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association, supporting veteran journalists and mentoring new ones. Last year, he was inducted into the prestigious Silver Circle of the San Francisco/Northern California National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

That Voice Sure Sounds Familiar

by VBL Secretary **Allen Chamberlin**

As many of you will learn in this edition of VBL’s “pullet surprise”-worthy newsletter, our president, **Jim Drennan**, has suffered a medical setback and is in an assisted living situation—let us hope temporarily. It’s a very nice facility with a warm staff. Jim’s partner **Kenny Matsumoto** was there the last months of his life and many on the staff remember both of them. Jim has been welcomed back by people he knows.

ANYWAY, for the two weeks prior to moving to Sunrise of Carmichael, he was in the Roseville Care Center. As his medical power of attorney person, I had to make *a lot* of calls to the place. Which is to say I spent *a lot* of time on hold. Guess what? Or more precisely guess *whom* recorded their on-hold encouragement to, “*Stay on the line. We’ll be with you shortly. Did you know the most excellent and wonderful Roseville Care Center can ...?*” I swore it was our own **Dann Shively** talking to me. With that bright positive tone and clear articulation, it had to be Dann.

I decided I needed to ask him and compliment him on his voice-work. So I emailed him only to learn, “Nope. That’s not one of mine. I get complimented time to time for recordings by whomever that other guy is. But I appreciate the [mistaken] recognition.” I was stunned. The voice is identical in cadence and quality. I suggested Dann should sue for talent infringement. But our ever-positive and good natured member just laughed me off (as do most intelligent people). However, it struck me to suggest to Dann, “I bet that other guy gets asked if it’s fun to fly a helicopter.”



Lonnie Wong at the start of his career at Fox40 . . .



. . . and 40 years later.

The Legends

Membership as of Sept. 30, 2021

John Archer • Julie Archer
 Jay “DJ Jay” Arnold • Stan Atkinson
 Linda Bayley • Vic Biondi
 Bill Bishofberger • Thomas Blazowski
 Matias Bombal • Tom Buck
 Allen Chamberlin • Don Chandler
 Mark Chiolis • Chris Cochran
 Jim Drennan • Claire Elliott • Curt Foley
 Vicki Fox • Gary Gerould
 Dennis Grayson • Cyndy Green
 Michael Guiliano • Kristine Hanson
 Bud Harmon • Fred Harris • Jerry Henry
 Betsy Hite • Rich Ibarra • John Jervis
 Rick Kavooras • Richard Kermickel
 Tip Kindel • Jan “Neely” Klevan
 Kim Kline • Ward Koppel • Bill Kreutzer
 Bud Kress • Joyce Krieg
 Eleanor Kuechler-VanAcker • Bob Lang
 Dick Leeson • Dee McCafferty
 Michael McCarron • Jeanne Marie
 Lizette Martinez-Hopkins
 Michael Messmer • Dana Michaels
 Ron Middlekauff • Bob Miller
 Alan Milner • Joyce Mitchell
 Keith Moon • Ray Nelson
 George Nyberg • John D. O’Brien
 Alan Oda • Deborah Pacyna
 Mary Jane Popp • Tiffany Powell
 Craig Prosser • Rich Raymond
 Bruce Riggs • Jay Rudin Beth Ruyak
 Bill Schmechel • Walt Shaw • Dann Shively
 Barbara Souza • Roy Stearns • Barry Stigers
 Bob Suffel • Steve Swatt
 Gregory VanAcker • Gregory Virtue
 Tom Wagner • Frank Wallace • Marla Wells
 Adrian Woodfork • Dennis Yoder
 Jan Young



One Broadcast Market, Two Countries

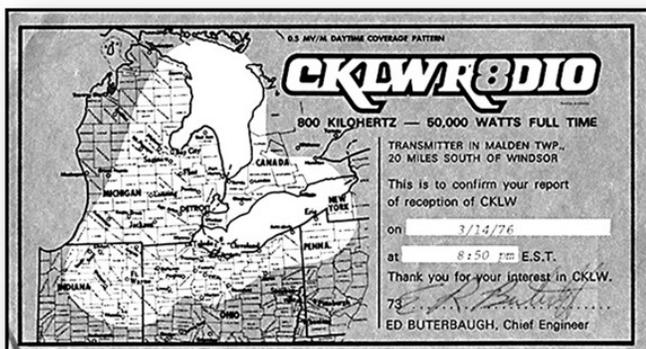
by VBL Secretary **Allen Chamberlin**

“SATURDAY! *Saturday!* AT DETROIT DRAG WAY!
Detroit drag way! Funny cars, demolition derby, monster trucks, nitromethane...” [Chorus jingle] “Radio 8! See kay el *double-you!*”

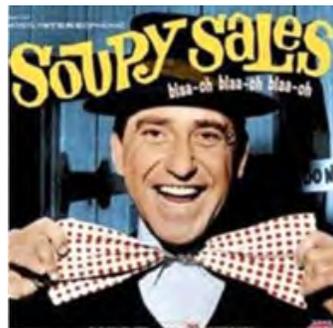
CKLW, Windsor, Ontario’s AM 800 was the power station I grew up with in the 60s. It played all the soulfullest Motown Sounds. While California surfed to the Beach Boys, we grooved with Smokey Robinson, Mary Wells, Diana Ross and the Supremes, The Four Tops, The “Temps”, Edwin Starr, The Miracles, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, Jr. Walker & the All Stars, Gladys Knight & the Pips ... not to mention the original Jackson 5 including young and innocent Michael Jackson. (Or was he?)

As a kid I never thought of Canada as a foreign country. Ontario was the state east of us in Michigan. Canada was our next-door neighbor a few miles down the road. We crossed the border both directions with a smile and a wave. (And in my undergraduate years, the drinking age east of the Detroit River was 18. So some of those waves coming back might have been a bit *too* happy-slappy.)

Our treasurer/videographer, **Ron Middlekauff**, was fortunate enough to be on Legend **Charlie Duncan**’s *Captain Delta Show* as a child, which may have inspired (or cursed) him to a broadcasting career as well. About ten years before Ron’s TV debut, I was in the audience of *The Soupy Sales Show* back when it was only a local kiddie show on Detroit’s WXYZ TV. My “cameraman” uncle worked for the station and got me into the Peanut Gallery. Note, I put cameraman in quotes not only because it’s gender limiting in today’s language, but because it understates the shooter’s qualifications at the time. No one back then could touch a camera if they weren’t a certified electronics technician who could take that huge monstrosity apart, fix it (swap vacuum tubes?), and put it back together. Videographers were station engineers.



This QSL card from 50,000 watt powerhouse CKLW makes it pretty clear this Canadian station’s target market was a certain nation south of the border.



But unlike Ron’s happy childhood memories of television stardom, mine is of utter embarrassment. When Soupy’s co-star chose kids to compete for prizes, my uncle saw to it I was chosen not once (to come in dead last), but a second time (to double my on-

air humiliation). The trauma was so complete, that was all I remembered from my first television experience, until about forty years later when I sat down to interview **Stas Wisniach** in Little Prague Bohemian Restaurant in Davis.

Stas was the original single-name accordionist. Stas was his name and squeeze-box his fame. He’d walked into my friends’ restaurant a few weeks earlier and hired himself to perform Eastern European music. Everyone loved him. As the eatery’s webmaster and publicist, I decided to promote him as a feature. Turned out, he was Soupy Sales’ slapstick sidekick.

“So you played accordion on the Soupy Sales Show in the 50s?” I asked.

“And main target in every pie fight!”

“That was Channel 7 in Detroit, WXYZ?”

Stas took my arcane knowledge about the station and the show as due such an important program. He didn’t catch on that I knew too much until I finally told him, “I saw you. My uncle was one of your camera-people. I was in the Peanut Gallery!”



IN-PERSON FOR CHRISTMAS?

Let’s all think a good thought!

In the meantime, save the date:

Thursday, December 9.